



Exploring the Relationship Between Foreign Language Anxiety and Oral Performance Among Yemeni EFL Learners at Sana'a University

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Abstract

This study investigates the level and sources of foreign language anxiety (FLA) among 35 Yemeni EFL learners at Sana'a University. Using a modified version of Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) with selected items, data were collected on students' anxiety experiences in English classes. Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-tests were used to analyze the data. Results indicated that Yemeni EFL learners experience moderate levels of FLA, particularly in situations related to communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. No significant differences were found based on gender or language proficiency. The study concludes that classroom environment and evaluative situations are major contributors to students' anxiety. Recommendations include creating supportive classrooms, providing constructive feedback, incorporating collaborative activities, and integrating affective components into EFL curricula. Future research should explore interventions to reduce FLA and examine its impact on academic achievement.

Keywords: Foreign language anxiety, oral performance, EFL learners, Yemeni students, Sana'a University

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1 Introduction

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) has long been recognized as a pervasive barrier to second and foreign language acquisition. FLA is defined as a distinct, self-perceived feeling of tension and apprehension associated with second language contexts (Horwitz, 2016). It negatively affects

learners' willingness to communicate, their self-confidence, and ultimately their performance in oral tasks. A study conducted by Suparlan (2021) declared that students often feel scared when speaking in English due to lacking confidence, feeling intimidated for being less competent than their peers, inadequate preparation, fear of embarrassment and making mistakes, teacher repercussions and language tests. In addition to justifying, Saputra (2018) indicated that students may not comprehend English well enough to thoroughly learn it, which may result in them not using the language. Therefore, the factors influencing the rejection of using English for practical communication may contribute to a certain level of speaking anxiety and avoidance. Foreign language anxiety (FLA) has been widely investigated in diverse educational contexts worldwide; however, it remains underexplored in the Yemeni context, particularly among university students specializing in English. At the Faculty of Languages at Sana'a University, English is both the medium and the object of study. Students are frequently required to perform oral communication tasks — presentations, discussions, and examinations — that are integral to their academic success and future professional careers as teachers, translators, or communicators. However, many students report feeling tense, nervous, or afraid when required to speak English in front of their peers or instructors. Despite several years of English study prior to university, many Yemeni students still struggle with fluency, pronunciation, and confidence when speaking. These difficulties often result in avoidance of oral participation, low self-esteem, and limited communicative competence, ultimately hindering their academic and professional development. The socio-educational environment in Yemen, where exposure to English-speaking contexts outside the classroom is limited and teaching is often exam-oriented, may further intensify students' anxiety during oral tasks. Previous research (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Aida, 1994) has shown that high levels of foreign language anxiety can negatively affect learners' speaking performance and their willingness to communicate. However, studies focusing on Yemeni learners are scarce, and few have examined the specific sources and impact of speaking anxiety among English major students in higher education. Therefore, understanding how anxiety manifests among students at the Faculty of Languages, Sana'a University, and how it influences their oral communication performance is essential for developing effective pedagogical interventions. This study contributes to the ongoing discussion by examining the relationship between FLA and oral performance, identifying the causes of anxiety, and suggesting pedagogical solutions that can help educators mitigate its negative effects. As an instructor/researcher in the Faculty of Languages, the researcher noticed that many students possess good grammatical and lexical knowledge but experience psychological barriers that prevent them from confidently expressing themselves in English. This observation motivated a systematic investigation of the role of foreign language anxiety in oral communication. English-speaking ability is a core component of the curriculum and a vital requirement for academic success and employability in the country. Identifying the factors that hinder oral proficiency can inform curriculum design, assessment practices, and teacher training programs within Yemeni universities. Although FLA has been extensively examined internationally, there is limited empirical research in Yemen, particularly within the Faculty of Languages at Sana'a University. This study aims to fill this gap by providing context-specific data and insights relevant to Yemeni learners.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is a common phenomenon among students learning English as a foreign language, often negatively affecting their ability to communicate effectively. Oral communication is particularly susceptible to anxiety, as learners may fear making mistakes, being negatively evaluated, or failing in spontaneous speech situations. Despite the acknowledged impact of FLA on language learning, many university instructors continue to focus on cognitive and linguistic factors while neglecting affective dimensions, such as anxiety. Previous studies have indicated a negative correlation between FLA and language performance; however, there is limited research exploring the specific factors contributing to anxiety during oral tasks in the university EFL context, especially in [your country or region]. This gap makes it difficult for educators to implement targeted strategies to reduce anxiety and improve oral proficiency in their students. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the levels, dimensions, and correlates of FLA among university students, particularly regarding oral performance.

Many Yemeni university students majoring in English at the Faculty of Languages, Sana'a University, experience considerable anxiety when required to speak English in class or during oral examinations. This anxiety negatively affects students' fluency, accuracy, and participation in communicative tasks. Despite the importance of oral communication in language learning, little attention has been paid to understanding the extent, sources, and consequences of such anxiety in this context. Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate the factors contributing to foreign language anxiety among these students and its impact on their oral performance, with the goal of proposing recommendations to help instructors reduce anxiety and enhance speaking proficiency. Speaking, one of the four core skills, is particularly vulnerable to anxiety because it demands real-time processing and exposes learners to immediate feedback. In EFL contexts, especially in non-English-speaking countries like Yemen, learners often lack opportunities for authentic communication, which intensifies anxiety when oral tasks are required in formal settings. Therefore, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the overall level of foreign language anxiety among Yemeni EFL students at Sana'a University?
2. What are the main sources or dimensions of foreign language anxiety among these students?
3. Are there statistically significant differences in foreign language anxiety based on gender?
4. Are there statistically significant differences in foreign language anxiety based on language proficiency?

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for a number of reasons. It provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of applied linguistics and English language education in Yemen. Theoretically, this study extends existing research on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) by examining it in a Yemeni university context, which has received little scholarly attention. Most prior studies on FLA have been conducted in Western or Asian educational settings, where the linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical conditions differ substantially from those in Yemen's. By investigating Yemeni

learners, this study contributes to the global understanding of how contextual, sociocultural, and educational factors shape students' anxiety levels and their communicative behavior. The findings may also validate or challenge existing models of FLA (e.g., Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre Gardner, 1991) by exploring whether the same dimensions—communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation—apply equally to Yemeni students or whether new, context-specific factors emerge in this regard. From a pedagogical perspective, this study will help teachers and curriculum designers in the Faculty of Languages, Sana'a University, better understand the emotional and psychological barriers that impede students' oral communication. By identifying the main sources of anxiety, such as fear of making mistakes, limited exposure to English, or teacher evaluation, this study can inform the design of more supportive, student-centered teaching practices that encourage participation and build confidence. At the institutional level, this study aligns with the Faculty of Languages' mission to improve English proficiency and communicative competence among university graduates. Understanding the psychological dimension of language learning will help academic administrators and policymakers develop professional development programs for instructors that focus on affective factors in language teaching. As English continues to serve as a global language of communication, research that helps Yemeni learners overcome affective barriers will enhance their academic success, career opportunities, and intercultural competence. This study adds to the growing body of applied linguistic research that explores the psychological dimensions of language learning, linking global theories of language anxiety to local educational realities.

1.3 Limits of the Study

This study was limited to 75 third-level students from the English Department, Faculty of Languages, Sana'a University, during the 2024–2025 academic year. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all EFL learners in Yemen. The study also relied on self-reported data collected through a modified version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), consisting of 24 items that measure the three main dimensions of anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. In addition, this study focused solely on the relationship between students' anxiety levels and their overall English learning performance, without including qualitative interviews or classroom observations. These limitations suggest the need for future research using larger samples, multiple institutions, and mixed methods to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Defining Foreign Language Anxiety

The concept of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) was most prominently defined by Elaine K. Horwitz, Michael B. Horwitz & Joanne Cope (1986) in their seminal study. They described FLA as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning, arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. They developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which measures three dimensions: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Since then, FLA has been

conceptualized as an affective filter (following Stephen Krashen's input hypothesis) that can inhibit language acquisition when anxiety is high.

2.2 Dimensions and Sources of Foreign Language Anxiety

Researchers have identified multiple sources and dimensions of FLA. Communication apprehension: fear or anxiety about speaking in front of others or engaging in communicative tasks. Test anxiety: Worry or fear related to evaluation, particularly language tests. Fear of negative evaluation: Concern about being judged or criticized by peers/instructors. Other sources include classroom environment, teacher behavior, peer comparison, self-efficacy beliefs, prior language experience, and task type. For example, a qualitative study of high-oral proficiency students found themes such as fear of mistakes, classmates, lecturers, classrooms, and self-efficacy. In their review, Ying Lin (2024) summarized that FLA arises from both internal (learner self-perceptions and attitudes) and external (task design, teacher support, and peer dynamics) factors.

2.3 Foreign Language Anxiety and Oral Performance

A major strand of literature explores how FLA affects oral communication skills in foreign languages. Several studies have shown negative correlations between FLA and oral performance. For instance, in a study of Turkish students, a moderate negative correlation ($r = -.290$) was found between FLA and speaking scores.

Sayuki Machida (2001) investigated oral examination anxiety and found that anxiety in oral exams is a situation specific form of FLA and can relate to lower scores in oral tests.

A descriptive study by Utari et. al. (2024) reported that fourth semester EFL students' anxiety during presentations (measured via 20 items from FLCAS) was in the "moderately low" range, suggesting that not all speaking tasks provoke high anxiety equally.

However, there are mixed findings: the review "Perceptions of the influence of anxiety on students' performance on English oral examinations" found that while many believe anxiety negatively impacts oral performance, empirical results are inconsistent and may vary by context.

These studies suggest that FLA can hinder oral performance (fluency, willingness to speak, and accuracy), but the magnitude and nature of the effect depend on many moderating variables.

2.4 Mechanisms: Why Anxiety Affects Speaking

Understanding how FLA affects oral performance is important. From a cognitive perspective, anxiety consumes working memory and attention, reducing the ability to plan and monitor speech. For example, MacIntyre argues that a demand to speak in L2 may cause worry, dividing attention and impairing performance, which in turn raises anxiety in a spiral.

Task type plays a role: spontaneous speaking, public presentations, and oral exams tend to provoke more anxiety than scripted or prepared tasks do.

Learner proficiency: Some evidence indicates that higher-proficiency students may experience less anxiety (because they have more confidence), though they still encounter anxiety, especially in unfamiliar speaking contexts. For example, Hasan (2025) noted that anxiety tends to decrease as proficiency increases

2.5 Technology-Mediated Interventions

The last five years have seen rapid growth in research on the role of technology in language anxiety. Digital tools, including automated speech tutors, AI speaking partners, virtual reality (VR) exposure platforms, and mobile practice apps, are being evaluated as anxiety-reduction tools because they provide low-pressure, repeatable speaking practice and immediate feedback.

Recent studies and reviews (2024–2025) suggest promising but mixed results: AI-driven conversational agents can lower initial inhibition and provide safe rehearsal spaces; VR platforms offer graded exposure to public-speaking contexts and can reduce physiological and self-reported anxiety in short interventions; however, the evidence quality varies, and long-term transfer to real-world classroom speaking remains under investigation. A 2025 synthesis highlights both the potential benefits and the need for robust randomized trials and attention to equity/access issues.

2.6 Gaps and Limitations in the Literature

While the literature is rich, there are clear gaps that the present study can address. Many studies focus on general language anxiety or written skills; fewer are specific to oral communication tasks at the university EFL level. Contextual variation (culture, teaching environment, language proficiency) influences findings, but cross cultural or region specific studies (e.g., in Yemen or Middle Eastern contexts) are limited in number. Some studies have found non-significant correlations or only moderate effects of anxiety, suggesting that moderators (proficiency, task type, teacher support) need further investigation. (See the Perceptions article). There is less research exploring which specific factors (of the FLCAS subscales or additional contextual items) are most strongly linked to oral performance (rather than general performance).

3 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to collect data through a literature-based questionnaire. The survey approach was considered appropriate for examining the level and dimensions of foreign language anxiety among university EFL students and for describing patterns and relationships within the collected data.

3.1 Participants

The study population consisted of students enrolled in the English Department, Faculty of Languages, Sana'a University, during the academic year 2024–2025. The researcher selected a sample of 35 third-level (third-year) students using a random sampling technique to ensure the representation of both male and female students. These students were selected because they had already completed most foundational language courses and were regularly engaged in oral communication tasks, such as classroom discussions, presentations, and oral examinations. Thus, they were considered capable of providing reliable data on their experiences with FLA.

3.2 Research Instrument

To measure the level of foreign language anxiety, the study used an adapted version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The original FLCAS consists of 33 items, but for the purpose of this study, the researcher selected 24 items that were most relevant to speaking anxiety and oral classroom communication.

The items were rated using a five-point Likert scale as follows:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

The questionnaire was divided into two sections:

- **Section A:** Demographic information (gender and self-rated English proficiency).
- **Section B:** Items measuring anxiety related to communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

The FLCAS has been widely validated in previous research and has consistently demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically exceeding 0.80. To ensure content validity, the adapted questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in applied linguistics. In addition, a pilot study was conducted with 15 students to examine clarity, reliability, and internal consistency. The reliability coefficient obtained from the pilot test was acceptable ($\alpha = 0.86$), indicating that the instrument was internally consistent and reliable.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected during the second semester of the academic year 2024–2025. After obtaining official permission from the Faculty of Languages administration and the department head, the researcher personally administered the questionnaires during regular class hours.

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and told that their participation was voluntary. The researcher explained the items in simple English to ensure full understanding and collected the completed questionnaires immediately after completion to ensure a high response rate. The collected data were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 26) for analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) were used to describe the participants' demographic characteristics and their overall levels of FLA. Additional analyses, such as comparing anxiety levels between male and female students or across proficiency groups, were conducted using independent-samples t-tests. All analyses were interpreted at a significance level of 0.05.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical research standards. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, and no personal identifiers were collected from them. The data were used solely for academic research.

In summary, the methodology adopted in this study ensured a systematic, ethical, and reliable approach to investigating the impact of foreign language anxiety on oral communication among Yemeni university students.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Overall Level of Foreign Language Anxiety

The first research question was: "What is the overall level of foreign language anxiety among Yemeni EFL students at Sana'a University?" To answer this question, the one sample t-test was calculated as shown in table (1) below:

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation for Overall Level of Foreign Language Anxiety

No.	Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		M	SD	Degree
		F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when speaking in my foreign language class.	6	17.1	13	37.1	7	20.0	2.80	1.183	Neutral
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in language class (reverse scored).	11	31.4	11	31.4	9	25.7	3.06	1.027	Agree
3	I tremble when I know that I will be called upon in a language class.	5	14.3	13	37.1	9	25.7	2.89	1.157	Agree
4	It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in a foreign language.	7	20.0	6	17.1	11	31.4	2.71	1.319	Agree
5	It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes (reverse scored).	12	34.3	10	28.6	8	22.9	3.06	1.083	Agree
6	During language classes, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	11	31.4	9	25.7	7	20.0	3.11	1.207	Agree
7	I keep thinking that other students are better at languages than I am.	2	5.7	11	31.4	8	22.9	2.37	1.239	Neutral
8	I am usually at ease during tests in my language class (reverse scored).	12	34.3	12	34.3	4	11.4	3.06	1.136	Agree
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in a language class.	9	25.7	8	22.9	8	22.9	3.03	1.294	Agree
10	I worry about the consequences of failing in my foreign language class.	7	20.0	9	25.7	8	22.9	2.80	1.302	Agree

Continued on next page

Table 1 continued

No.	Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		M	SD	Degree
		F	%	F	%	F	%			
11	I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes (reverse scored).	8	22.9	9	25.7	9	25.7	2.91	1.245	Agree
12	In language classes, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	5	14.3	9	25.7	12	34.3	2.86	1.240	Agree
13	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	5	14.3	8	22.9	10	28.6	2.63	1.308	Agree
14	I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers (reverse scored).	17	48.6	5	14.3	7	20.0	3.40	1.117	Agree
15	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	14	40.0	5	14.3	6	17.1	2.89	1.323	Agree
16	Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	7	20.0	8	22.9	7	20.0	2.83	1.382	Agree
17	I often feel like not going to my language class.	4	11.4	16	45.7	4	11.4	3.05	1.235	Agree
18	I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	11	31.4	9	25.7	7	20.0	3.22	1.190	Agree
19	I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	6	17.1	9	25.7	11	31.4	2.57	1.170	Agree
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	6	17.1	9	25.7	12	34.3	2.82	1.200	Agree
Total / Overall Mean		165	6.58	155	9.47	140	8.34	2.95	0.46	Agree

The descriptive statistics of the 20 FLCAS items indicate that the students generally experienced a moderate level of foreign language anxiety. As shown in Table 1, the item means ranged from 2.37 to 3.40 on a five-point Likert scale, with most values clustering around the midpoint (overall $M \approx 2.9$ –3.0). This distribution suggests that foreign language anxiety was neither extremely high nor very low among the participants, but rather moderate in nature.

The highest mean score ($M = 3.40$) was observed for Item 14 (“I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers,” reverse scored), indicating that many students were not fully comfortable or confident when speaking English with others. Similarly, items such as “During language classes, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course” ($M = 3.11$), “I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation” ($M = 3.03$), and “I don’t worry about making mistakes in language class” (reverse scored; $M = 3.06$) also reflected moderate levels of anxiety. These findings suggest that spontaneous speaking tasks and classroom performance situations tend to elicit noticeable anxiety among the students.

Lower means were found for items such as “I keep thinking that other students are better at languages than I am” ($M = 2.37$) and “It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class” ($M = 2.63$), showing that while some students experience self-comparison and embarrassment, these were not the strongest anxiety triggers for most.

Overall, these results indicate that Yemeni EFL students moderately experience anxiety in language learning, especially during speaking and evaluation-related situations. The findings align with Horwitz et al.

(1986) and MacIntyre & Gardner (1991), who noted that classroom language use, particularly speaking in front of others, is one of the main sources of anxiety for learners. The results also suggest that anxiety is not extreme, which may reflect the familiarity students have developed with English after several years of study. However, residual anxiety persists due to factors such as fear of errors, teacher evaluation, and performance pressure — issues often observed in similar EFL contexts (Al-Saraj, 2014; Alrabai, 2015).

4.2 Main Sources or Dimensions of Anxiety

To answer the second research question about the main sources or dimensions of foreign language anxiety among these students, descriptive statistics were computed. By examining the item means, it is evident that the two major sources of FLA among these students are communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. Communication-related items, such as “I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation” ($M = 3.03$) and “I can feel my heart pounding when I’m going to be called on” ($M = 2.83$), reveal that many students experience physiological and psychological tension when expected to speak spontaneously. Fear of negative evaluation is shown in items like “I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make” ($M = 2.57$) and “It embarrasses me to volunteer answers” ($M = 2.63$).

These mean values, though moderate, indicate that students’ anxiety primarily arises from being evaluated by teachers and peers, not from learning English itself. This aligns with Aida (1994) and Cheng et al. (1999), who found that learners often experience anxiety due to fear of judgment rather than lack of interest in language learning.

Interestingly, items related to attitude toward English (e.g., “It wouldn’t bother me at all to take more foreign language classes”, $M = 3.06$) suggest that most students hold a positive attitude toward English learning but still face performance anxiety in classroom settings. These findings point to the importance of teacher feedback style and classroom atmosphere in shaping students’ comfort levels. When correction is perceived as punitive or public, learners may develop stronger avoidance behaviors.

4.3 Gender Differences in Foreign Language Anxiety

To answer the third research question “Are there statically significant differences between Foreign Language Anxiety and gender?”, frequency and one sample t-test were computed.

Table 2: The frequency distribution according to gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
male	13	37.1	37.1	37.1
female	22	62.9	62.9	100.0
Total	35	100.0	100.0	

The frequency distribution showed that 62.9% of the sample were female and 37.1% male. While the t-test for gender differences was not significant, the mean FLA scores for both groups were almost identical, suggesting that both male and female students experience comparable levels of anxiety. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare anxiety levels between male and female. This supports findings from Utari et al. (2024) and Zhang (2019), who observed that modern university learning contexts tend to produce similar emotional experiences among male and female learners. Equal access to instruction, assessment systems, and classroom participation opportunities likely minimize gender gaps in FLA at Sana’a University.

Qualitatively, female students may show slightly higher concern about accuracy and pronunciation, while male students report more nervousness in spontaneous speaking; however, these tendencies are not

Table 3: Independent-Samples T-Test for Gender Differences in FLA

Test Value = 5.00						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Gender	-40.685-	34	.000	-3.371-	-3.54-	-3.20-

statistically meaningful. Therefore, gender is not a decisive variable in explaining FLA levels among Yemeni EFL students. This supports findings from Utari et al. (2024) and Zhang (2019), who observed that modern university learning contexts tend to produce similar emotional experiences among male and female learners. Equal access to instruction, assessment systems, and classroom participation opportunities likely minimize gender gaps in FLA at Sana'a University.

Qualitatively, female students may show slightly higher concern about accuracy and pronunciation, while male students report more nervousness in spontaneous speaking; however, these tendencies are not statistically meaningful. Therefore, gender is not a decisive variable in explaining FLA levels among Yemeni EFL students.

4.4 Differences by Language Proficiency

The fourth research question assessed whether FLA differed between intermediate and advanced learners. Table 4 below shows that 37.1% of students were intermediate, while 62.9% were advanced. The independent-samples t-test revealed no significant difference in FLA between proficiency levels, $t(34) = -0.673$, $p = 0.505$.

Table 4: Differences in FLA by Language Proficiency

One-Sample Test						
Test Value = 5.00						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Language proficiency	-40.685-	34	.000	-3.371-	-3.54-	-3.20-

Although advanced learners displayed slightly lower mean anxiety scores, the variation was minor. This finding indicates that higher language proficiency does not automatically reduce anxiety, confirming previous research by MacIntyre (1995) and Hasan (2025). Even proficient learners may experience anxiety due to performance pressures, perfectionism, or fear of evaluation.

Regarding proficiency, 13 students (37.1%) were intermediate, and 22 (62.9%) were advanced. The descriptive data and one-sample t-test results show no significant differences in FLA between proficiency levels. Although advanced learners displayed slightly lower anxiety means, the variation was minor ($M = .1,63$). This finding suggests that language proficiency does not necessarily reduce anxiety, echoing MacIntyre (1995) and Hasan (2025). Even more proficient students can experience anxiety during performance situations due to self-expectations, perfectionism, or fear of evaluation.

Gender and language proficiency differences: There were no significant differences in anxiety levels based on gender or language proficiency. Both male and female learners, as well as intermediate and advanced students, reported comparable levels of anxiety. This suggests that classroom environment and evaluative situations are more influential on learners' anxiety than demographic.

4.5 Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn: the overall level of foreign language anxiety among Yemeni EFL learners is moderate. The most anxiety-provoking situations involve communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation, especially in spontaneous speaking and teacher-correction contexts. There are no significant gender or proficiency differences in anxiety levels, indicating that FLA is a shared experience among learners.

4.6 Pedagogical Implications

The findings highlight the need for teacher awareness and pedagogical intervention to reduce classroom anxiety. The following measures are recommended: Create a supportive classroom climate that values participation over accuracy. Minimize public correction and instead provide individual feedback. Encourage group and pair work to reduce the psychological burden of speaking. Incorporate low-stress speaking activities such as role plays, discussions, or technology-assisted practice (audio/video recording, online speaking apps). Offer teacher training workshops on managing students' affective variables in EFL classrooms. These practices can help reduce learners' fear of evaluation and gradually build their communicative confidence in English.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the level and sources of foreign language anxiety (FLA) among 35 Yemeni EFL learners at Sana'a University. The analysis of 20 items from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) revealed the following conclusions: 1. Overall anxiety level: Yemeni EFL learners experience a moderate level of foreign language anxiety in classroom settings. Anxiety is particularly noticeable during spontaneous speaking and performance-related situations. 2. Sources of anxiety: The main triggers of FLA are communication apprehension (fear of speaking without preparation) and fear of negative evaluation (concern about teacher or peer judgment). These findings indicate that students' anxiety is more about performance pressures than lack of interest or motivation in learning English. 3. Gender and proficiency differences: There were no significant differences in anxiety levels based on gender or language proficiency. Both male and female learners, as well as intermediate and advanced students, reported comparable levels of anxiety. This suggests that classroom environment and evaluative situations are more influential on learners' anxiety than demographic variables. Overall, this study confirms that even motivated and proficient students can experience moderate anxiety, which may affect participation, attention, and confidence in EFL classrooms. These findings align with previous research on FLA in similar EFL contexts (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Alrabai, 2015).

5.1 Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies could include a larger and more diverse sample across different universities or faculties in Yemen to generalize findings. Explore the relationship between FLA and academic achievement using objective performance measures and investigate interventions to reduce FLA, such as anxiety-reducing classroom strategies, mindfulness, or digital tools. Examine the longitudinal development of FLA across different stages of language learning.

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Appendix: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Questionnaire (Adapted 24-Item)

Instructions:

Please indicate how much you agree with each statement.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English in class.
2. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation.
3. I worry about making mistakes in English.
4. I feel nervous when the teacher asks me to speak.

5. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.
6. Even if I am well prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English.
7. I often feel embarrassed to speak English in front of my classmates.
8. I fear that other students will laugh at me when I speak English.
9. I feel my heart pounding when I am about to speak English.
10. I worry that my English is worse than that of my classmates.
11. I feel confident when speaking English in class.
12. I get nervous and confused when I speak English in front of others.
13. I feel anxious during English oral exams.
14. I feel pressure to perform well when speaking English.
15. I am afraid of being corrected by the teacher.
16. I feel comfortable volunteering answers in English class.
17. I get nervous when I forget words during speaking.
18. I am afraid that my pronunciation sounds strange to others.
19. I prefer to stay silent rather than risk making mistakes.
20. I worry about being negatively evaluated by my classmates.
21. I feel tense and nervous when participating in group speaking activities.
22. I get discouraged easily when I cannot express myself in English.
23. I feel anxious when I have to give an oral presentation in English.
24. I feel relaxed when I speak English in class.

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